

2022–2023 Migratory Game Bird Hunting Seasons

Federal Frameworks and Staff Recommendations

Each year, the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) develops recommendations for Migratory Game Bird hunting seasons and bag limits in Virginia in accordance with the annual U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service migratory bird hunting regulations or “Federal Frameworks”. These “frameworks” are based on current bird population levels and species management plans. The frameworks establish the basic season parameters such as season lengths, total bag limits and dates within which the seasons can be held in each flyway. The DWR sets the season dates and bag limits for Virginia within these basic frameworks. Based on the preliminary Federal Frameworks for the 2022-2023 hunting seasons, the DWR has developed recommendations for the migratory game bird seasons and bag limits in Virginia as listed below.

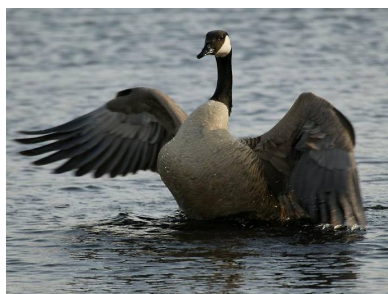
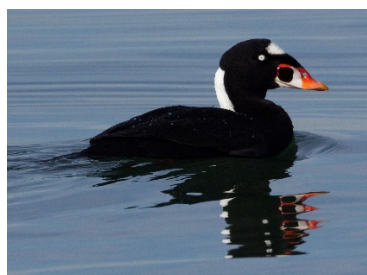
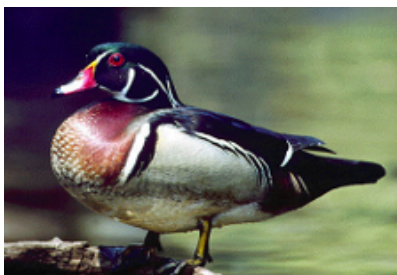
Most of the Federal Frameworks are the same as they were last year with two exceptions. The first of which is that the “Special Sea Duck Season” has been eliminated due to continued declines in sea duck populations. Sea ducks can still be taken during the regular duck season, but individual species limits have been reduced (see page 8). The second change is that the bag limit restriction on Hooded Mergansers has been removed. The bag limit on hooded mergansers is now equal to the total bag limit of all mergansers (5) (see page 9).

We are providing an opportunity for the public to comment on these recommendations by email from **February 1 through March 4, 2022** at the following address: MigratoryGameBirdComments@dwr.virginia.gov. After consideration of the public comments, final DWR staff proposals will be developed and presented to the DWR Board for final action at their March 24, 2022 meeting. Regulations approved by the Board will go into effect for the 2022-2023 hunting season starting on September 1, 2022. We appreciate your interest and comments so we can develop seasons with input from our Virginia hunters.

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE RESOURCES

2022-2023

MIGRATORY GAME BIRD HUNTING SEASONS – FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS AND STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS



**Prepared by Wildlife Division
January 2022**

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| DOVE |
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FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

OUTSIDE DATES: September 1, 2022 - January 31, 2023
Hunting dates may run consecutively or be split into no more than three (3) segments.

SEASON LENGTH: Not more than 90 days.

BAG LIMIT: 15 daily and 45 in possession. Daily bag limit can be composed of mourning doves and white-winged doves, singly or in combination

SHOOTING HOURS: Between ½ hour before sunrise and sunset daily (State may select ½ day shooting in any segment).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

SEASON DATES: September 3 - October 23 (51 days)
November 19 - November 27 (9 days)
December 23 - January 21 (30 days)

SHOOTING HOURS: September 3 Noon until sunset
September 4 – October 23 ½ hr before sunrise to sunset.
November 19 – November 27 ½ hr before sunrise to sunset.
December 23 - January 21 ½ hr before sunrise to sunset.

BAG LIMIT: 15 daily and 45 in possession. Composed of mourning doves and white-winged doves, singly or in combination

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| RAILS (Clapper, King, Sora, Virginia) & Gallinules (Common, Purple) |
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FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

OUTSIDE DATES: September 1, 2022 - January 31, 2023

SEASON LENGTH: 70 days, straight or 2 segments.

BAG LIMIT:
Clapper/King - 15 daily, 45 possession
Sora/Virginia - 25 daily, 75 possession
Gallinules - 15 daily, 45 possession

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until sunset daily

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

SEASON DATES: September 9 - November 17 (70 days)

BAG LIMIT:
Clapper/King: 15 - counted together daily, only 1 can be a King Rail,
45 in possession, (only 3 can be King Rails).
Sora/Virginia: 25 - counted together daily, 75 poss.
Gallinules: 15 daily - counted together daily, 45 poss.

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until sunset

NOTES: - This recommendation provides 30 days of 3-ft or greater lunar tides.
- Non-Toxic shot is required for Rail, Snipe and Gallinule hunting in Virginia.

WOODCOCK

FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

OUTSIDE DATES: October 1, 2022 - January 31, 2023

SEASON LENGTH: 45 days, straight or 2 segments.

BAG LIMIT: 3 daily, 9 in possession.

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until
sunset daily.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

SEASON DATES: November 11 – December 6 (26 days)
December 27 – January 14 (19 days)

BAG LIMIT: 3 daily, 9 in possession

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until sunset

SNIFE

FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

OUTSIDE DATES: September 1, 2022 - January 31, 2023

SEASON LENGTH: 107 days, straight or 2 segments

BAG LIMIT: 8 daily, 24 possession

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until sunset

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

SEASON DATES: October 7 - October 10 (4 days)
October 21 - January 31 (103 days)

BAG LIMIT: 8 daily, 24 in possession

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until sunset

SEPTEMBER TEAL SEASON

FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

OUTSIDE DATES: September 1 – September 30, 2022

SEASON LENGTH: Up to 16 days

BAG LIMIT: 6 daily, 18 in possession (Blue-winged and Green-winged teal only)

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise to sunset

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

SEASON DATES: September 17 – September 30
HUNT AREA: East of I – 95

September 21 – September 30
HUNT AREA: West of I – 95

BAG LIMIT: 6 daily, 18 in possession (Blue-winged and Green-winged teal only).

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise to sunset

Mallard Bag Limit in the Atlantic Flyway

The mallard has been one of the most abundant duck species in eastern North America. However, in the past 20 years, “eastern” mallards have been on the decline. Surveys conducted since 1988 throughout eastern Canada and the northeastern U.S. have provided reliable annual estimates of the breeding population size of eastern mallards. These surveys indicate that mallard numbers have decreased steadily in the northeastern U.S., declining by about 38% since 1998. Mallard numbers in Eastern Canada have been relatively stable, but overall, the breeding mallard population in eastern North America is declining (Figure 1). About 60% of the mallards harvested in Atlantic Flyway states, and around 80% of those harvested in Virginia, are derived from the northeastern US. There has also been a significant decline in the mallard harvest in the Atlantic Flyway (around 40%, Figure 2), a direct result of this population decline.

Figure 1. Mallard breeding population in eastern North America

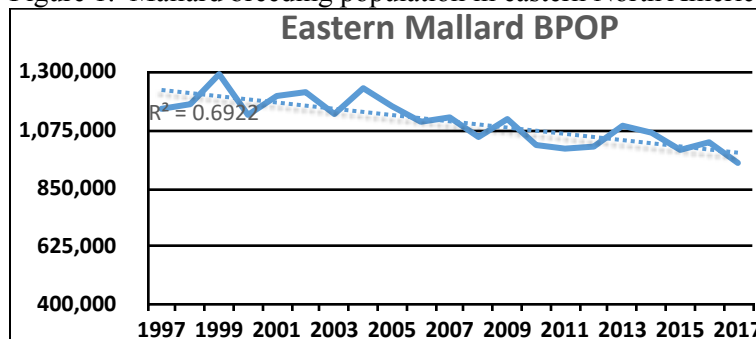


Figure 2. Mallard Harvest in the U.S. portion of the Atlantic Flyway

Population models suggested that cutting the daily bag limit in half would reduce the harvest by 25%, and would achieve a sustainable harvest level based on the current population. Therefore, beginning in the 2019-20 season the Atlantic Flyway and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reduced the bag limit from 4 to 2 mallards (only 1 hen) in the Atlantic Flyway. This reduction remained in effect for the 2020-21 and 2021-2022 seasons. A new harvest strategy is being developed that will help guide future hunting season regulations based on current mallard population dynamics. This strategy should be in place for the 2023 hunting season.

DUCKS

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

Outside Dates: September 24, 2022 - January 31, 2023

Season Length: 60 hunting days; plus 2 Youth/Veterans Waterfowl Hunt Days.

Note: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Atlantic Flyway States have eliminated the “Special Sea Duck Season” due to continued declines in sea duck populations. Sea Ducks can now only be taken during the regular duck season and individual species limits have been reduced as specified below.

Bag Limits: **Daily Bag limit of 6 ducks, with the following restrictions:**

Can include no more than 2 mallards (only 1 hen), 3 wood ducks, 2 black ducks, 2 canvasback, scaup: 1/day for 40 days and 2/day for 20 days, 2 redheads, 1 pintail, 1 mottled duck, 1 fulvous whistling duck, 4 total sea ducks (no more than 3 scoters, 3 eider (1 hen), 3 long-tailed ducks). Closed season on harlequin duck. Possession limit is three times the daily bag limit.

Split Season Options: 3-way split season, no zones

Shooting Hours: 1/2-hour before sunrise until sunset daily

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Season Length: 60 hunting days; plus 2 Youth/Veterans Waterfowl Hunting Day

Season Dates: October 7 - 10 (Black Duck closed)
November 16 – November 27
December 17 – January 29
October 22, February 4 – Youth/Veterans Waterfowl Days

Bag Limit: **Daily Bag limit of 6 ducks, with the following restrictions:**
can include no more than 2 mallards (only 1 hen), 3 wood ducks, 2 black ducks (except closed Oct. 7–10), scaup: 1/day from October 7-10, November 16-27, December 17 - January 9, and 2/day from January 10-29, 2 redheads, 2 canvasback, 1 pintail, 1 mottled duck, 1 fulvous whistling duck, 4 total sea ducks (no more than 3 scoters, 3 eiders (1 hen), 3 long-tailed ducks). Closed season on harlequin ducks. The possession limit is three times the daily bag limit.

Shooting Hours: 1/2-hour before sunrise until sunset daily

MERGANSER AND COOT

MERGANSER

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

Option A

Season Length: 60 hunting days
Outside Date: September 24, 2022 - January 31, 2023
Bag Limit: 5 birds daily (**Note** that the restriction on Hooded Mergansers has been removed).
15 in possession.

Option B

To be included into the general duck bag. If included in the general duck bag, the restriction on 2 hooded mergansers would apply.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Option A

Season Dates: To coincide with general duck season
Bag Limit: 5 birds daily, 15 in possession.

AMERICAN COOT

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

Season Length: 60 hunting days
Outside Date: September 25, 2022 - January 31, 2023
Bag Limit: 15 birds daily (45 in possession)

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Season Dates: To coincide with general duck season.
Bag Limit: 15 daily (45 in possession)

SEPTEMBER CANADA GOOSE

FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

OUTSIDE DATES: September 1 – September 25, 2022

BAG LIMIT: 15 daily, 45 in possession

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise to sunset (except as provided for in special hunting options *)

* SPECIAL HUNTING OPTIONS: Allows the use of electronic calls, unplugged shotguns and extended shooting hours (1/2 hr after sunset) when **no other** waterfowl seasons are open.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

SEASON DATES: September 1 – September 25 (25 days)

BAG LIMIT: 10 daily, 30 in possession

HUNT AREA: Statewide

SHOOTING
HOURS:

East of I-95

September 1 – 16: ½ hr before sunrise to ½ hr **after** sunset.

September 17 – 25: ½ hr before sunrise **to sunset.**

West of I-95

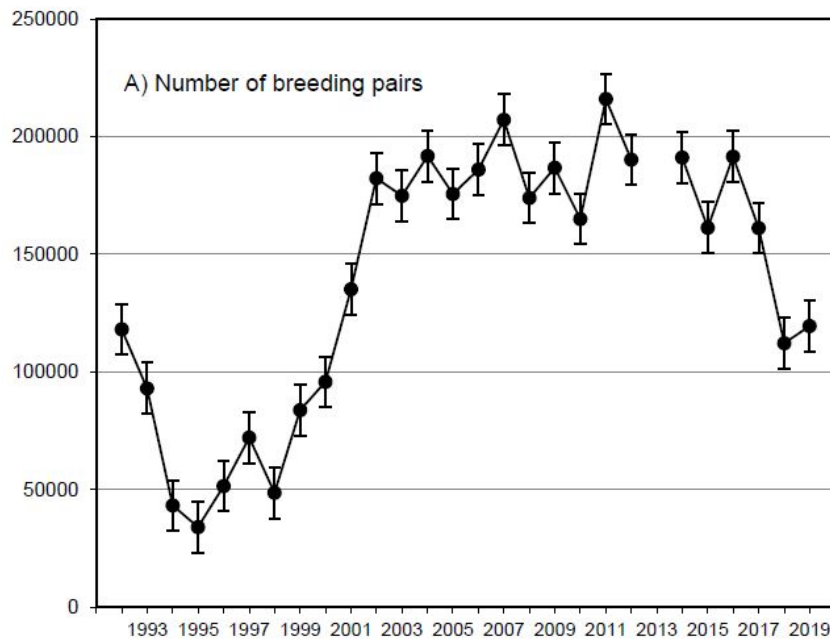
September 1 – 20: ½ hr before sunrise to ½ hr **after** sunset.

September 21 – 25: ½ hr before sunrise **to sunset.**

NOTE: Staff is not recommending the options of using electronic calls or unplugged shotguns for hunting geese in the September season.

FACT SHEET- History and Status of Migrant Canada Geese - 2021

- Migrant Canada geese from the Atlantic Population (AP) declined significantly from 1985-1995. The hunting season was closed in 1995 to allow the population to recover. Goose numbers rebounded quickly and a limited season (6 days with a 1-bird bag) was held in both 1999 and 2000. As the population increased, the season was extended to 30 days in 2001, then 45 days in 2002, and 50 days from 2012-2018.
- However, annual productivity has been below average for 6 of the past 7 years, leading to a decline in the breeding population over the past 4 years (see graph below). This has been the result of adverse weather conditions on the nesting grounds in northern Canada.
- Because of this declining trend, the Atlantic Flyway Council in cooperation with the USFWS reduced the hunting seasons on AP geese beginning in 2019-20. The season was restricted to 30 days with a 1-geese daily limit in the AP Goose Zone. These restrictive regulations will remain in effect for the 2022-23 season.
- The Canada goose season in the Southern James Bay and Resident (RP) Zones will also be similar to last year.



Canada Goose Populations and Hunt Zones

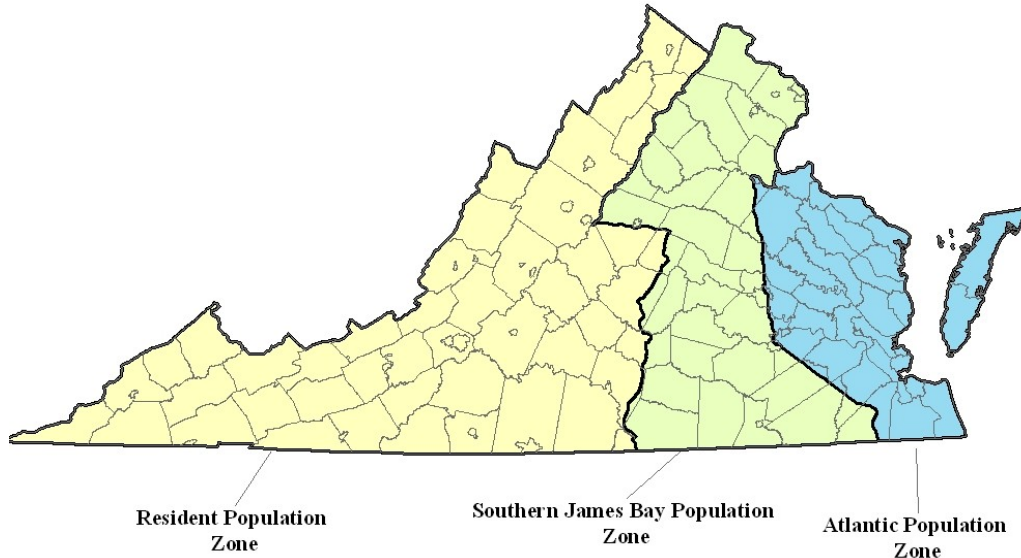
- There are 4 subpopulations of Canada geese in Virginia. These include the Atlantic Flyway Resident Population (RP) along with three migrant goose populations, the North Atlantic Population (NAP), the Southern James Bay Population (SJB), and the Atlantic Population (AP). The majority of our migrant geese (~82%) are from the AP, about 18% are from the SJB, and <1% are from the NAP.
- Recent research and banding analyses have enabled us to better delineate the distribution and migration corridors used by these different subpopulations, and to establish separate hunting zones based on the percentage of migrant geese in each zone. These zones include the:

Atlantic Population (AP) Hunt Zone – The area east of the Stafford/King George County line from the Potomac River south to the Rappahannock River, then west along the Stafford County line to Interstate 95, then south along I-95 to Route 460 in Petersburg, then southeast along Route 460 to Route 32 in the City of Suffolk, then south to the North Carolina border.

Southern James Bay Population (SJB) Hunt Zone – The area to the west of the AP Hunt Zone boundary and east of the following line: the “Blue Ridge” (Loudoun County-Clarke County line) at the West Virginia-Virginia Border, south to Interstate 64 (the Blue Ridge line follows county borders along the western edge of Loudoun-Fauquier-Rappahannock-Madison-Greene-Albemarle and into Nelson Counties), then east along Interstate Rt. 64 to Route 15, then south along Rt. 15 to the North Carolina line.

Resident Population (RP) Hunt Zone – The portion of the state west of the SJB Hunt Zone.

Virginia's Canada Goose Hunt Zones



CANADA GOOSE

FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

ATLANTIC POPULATION ZONE (AP):

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| <u>Season Length:</u> | 30 hunting days |
| <u>Outside Dates:</u> | November 15 – February 5 |
| <u>Bag Limit:</u> | 1 bird daily (3 in possession) |

SOUTHERN JAMES BAY POPULATION ZONE (SJBP)

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| <u>Outside Dates and Season Length:</u> | |
| Regular Season: | November 15 – January 14 (up to 40 hunting days) |
| Extended Season: | January 15 – February 15 |
| <u>Bag Limit:</u> | 3/day (9 in possession) through January 14 5/day (15 in possession), January 15 to February 15 |

RESIDENT POPULATION ZONE (RP):

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| <u>Outside Dates:</u> | November 15 – March 10 |
| <u>Season Length:</u> | 80 hunting days |
| <u>Bag Limit:</u> | 5 birds daily (15 in possession) |

NOTE – All seasons also include White-fronted geese along with Canada geese.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

ATLANTIC POPULATION ZONE: (AP)

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| <u>Season Dates:</u> | December 19 – January 1 | (14 days) |
| | January 14 – January 29 | (16 days) |
| <u>Bag Limit:</u> | 1 goose per day (3 in possession) | |
| <u>Shooting Hours:</u> | 1/2-hour before sunrise until sunset daily | |

SOUTHERN JAMES BAY POPULATION ZONE (SJBP)

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| <u>Season Dates:</u> | | | | |
| Regular Season: | November 16 – November 27 | 3/day | (12 days) | |
| | December 19 – January 14 | 3/day | (27 days) | |
| Extended Season: | January 15 - February 15 | 3/day | | |
| <u>Shooting Hours:</u> | | 1/2-hour before sunrise until sunset daily | | |

RESIDENT POPULATION ZONE: (RP)

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| <u>Season Dates:</u> | November 16 – November 27 |
| | December 17 - February 22 |
| <u>Bag Limit:</u> | 5 birds daily (15 in possession) |
| <u>Shooting Hours:</u> | 1/2-hour before sunrise until sunset daily |

NOTE – All seasons also include White-fronted geese along with Canada geese.

LIGHT GOOSE SEASONS

REGULAR LIGHT GOOSE SEASON

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

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| <u>Season Length:</u> | 107 hunting days |
| <u>Outside Dates:</u> | October 1, 2022 - March 10, 2023 |
| <u>Split Season Option:</u> | 3-way split season |
| <u>Bag Limit:</u> | 25 birds daily (no possession limit) |

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

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| <u>Season Dates:</u> | October 17 – January 31 | (107 days) |
| <u>Bag Limit:</u> | 25 birds daily | (no possession limit) |

LIGHT GOOSE CONSERVATION ORDER

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

- Outside Dates:** When no other waterfowl seasons are open
- Bag Limit:** No daily or possession limit
- Special Hunting Methods:** Electronic calls, unplugged shotguns and extended shooting hours to one-half hour after sunset **only in areas and at times when other waterfowl seasons are closed.**
- Special Requirements:** States participating in the Conservation Order are required to monitor hunter participation, effort, and success.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Conservation Order Zone: The same as the AP Canada Goose Zone - The area east of the Stafford/King George County line from the Potomac River south to the Rappahannock River, then west along the Stafford County line to Interstate 95, then south along I-95 to Route 460 in Petersburg, then southeast along Route 460 to Route 32 in the City of Suffolk, then south to the North Carolina border.

- Season Dates:** February 1 – April 5, 2023
- Bag Limit:** No daily or possession limit
- Special Hunting Methods:** Electronic calls, unplugged shotguns and extended shooting hours to one-half hour after sunset.
- Special Requirements:** Hunters participating in the Conservation Order **must register with DWR**, keep a record of their harvest and participation, and return a harvest report form within two weeks following the close of the season.

ATLANTIC BRANT

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

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| <u>Season Length:</u> | 50 hunting days |
| <u>Outside Dates:</u> | September 24, 2022 - January 31, 2023 |
| <u>Split Season Option:</u> | 2-way split season |
| <u>Bag Limit:</u> | 2 bird daily (6 in possession) |

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

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| <u>Season Dates:</u> | November 22 – November 27 December 17 – January 29 |
| <u>Bag Limit:</u> | 2 birds daily (6 in possession) |

TUNDRA SWAN

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

Season Length: 90 hunting days

Outside Dates: October 1, 2022 - January 31, 2023

Virginia may issue up to 532 permits and must obtain harvest and hunter participation data. Each permittee is authorized to take one (1) tundra swan per season.

Bag Limit: One per permittee per season

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Season Dates: November 16 - January 31

Bag Limit: One per permittee per season

Hunt Area: All counties and portions of counties east of U.S. Route I- 95 and south of the Prince William/Stafford county line in Chopawamsic Creek at Quantico Marine Corps Base.

NOTE: VDWR will issue no more than 532 swan-hunting permits to holders of a valid Virginia hunting license. Only hunters with a valid 2022-2023 tundra swan-hunting permit issued by VDWR shall be authorized to hunt tundra swans. Each permittee will be authorized to take one tundra swan during the season. Swan hunting permits are non-transferable and are valid for use only by the person to whom issued. Permits must be in the immediate possession of the permittee while swan hunting. Immediately at the time and place of kill, successful hunters must permanently record the month and day of kill on their permit and attach it to their swan. The VDWR is required to obtain hunter participation and harvest information to offer this Tundra Swan hunting season. **Hunters are required to complete the tundra swan hunt questionnaire (survey) and submit their results to the Department by February 15, 2023.** Those who fail to submit their results are ineligible for future drawings.

FALCONRY

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

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| <u>Season Length:</u> | No more than 107 on any species (Gun and Falconry combined) |
| <u>Outside Dates:</u> | September 1 - March 10 |
| <u>Bag Limit:</u> | 3 daily (9 in possession) |
| <u>Hawking Hours:</u> | ½ hour before sunrise until sunset. |

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

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| <u>Dove:</u> | September 3 – October 23 November 19 – November 27 December 23 – January 31 |
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| <u>Rail, Gallinule, Moorhen:</u> | September 9 – December 24 |
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| <u>Woodcock:</u> | October 17 – January 31 |
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| <u>Snipe:</u> | October 7 - 10 October 21 – January 31 |
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| <u>Canada Goose:</u> | September 1 - September 25 November 16 – November 27 December 17 - February 22 |
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| <u>September Teal:</u> | September 17 - September 30 |
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| <u>Ducks, Mergansers, Coot:</u> | October 7 - 10 November 16 – February 10 |
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| <u>Brant and Snow Goose:</u> | October 17 – January 31 |
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NOTE: Recommended dates based on adoption of preceding gun season proposals; if amended, staff requests permission to calculate permissible dates for each species within the allowable federal framework.